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ABSTRACT

An analysis of principals' beliefs and behaviors with regard to instructional supervision in the context of Meyer and Rowan's (1977, 1978) concept of the "logic of confidence" is presented in this report. Methodology involved interviews with and observations of 6 administrators and triangulating interviews with 12 teachers. Nine distinct analytical categories emerged, and data were compared across the six subjects within the categories. Results did not support Meyer and Rowan's hypothesis. Recent accountability measures initiated in the subjects' district had promoted close contact and monitoring of the teachers' work, and respect for the teachers and appreciation of their professionalism were attributable to that contact with the teachers in their daily instructional activities. (12 references) (LMI)

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The Logic of Confidence and the Supervision of Instruction: Perceptions and Practices of Elementary School Principals

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EA 022 496

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Abstract

In the works set forth by Meyer and Rowan concerning schools as institutionalized organizations, a dilemma arises surrounding the supervision of the technical activity (instruction) within those schools. While deemed important, the literature implies that, within schools, the practice is de-emphasized.

Meyer and Rowan suggest a "logic of confidence" is in effect that allows the organizations to maintain credibility in the face of this discrepancy. The answer is found in the dimensions of the logic of confidence: the "myth of professionalism" and the elements of "facework."

Six suburban public school principals were interviewed and observed. Their beliefs and behaviors with regard to instructional supervision were analyzed in the context of Meyer and Rowan's concept of the logic of confidence. Teacher interviews completed the data-gathering triangulation process. Nine distinct analytical categories emerged and data were compared across the six subjects within these categories.

Recent accountability measures initiated by the subjects' district had promoted close contact and monitoring of the teachers' work. As a result, Meyer and Rowan's concept received little support from the data. Respect for the teachers and an appreciation for their professionalism was more attributable to relatively close contact with the teachers in their daily instructional activities.

The Logic of Confidence and the Supervision of Instruction: Perceptions and Practices of Elementary School Principals

Introduction

In the late 1970's Meyer and Rowan (1977; 1978) developed a theory that explained why supervisors in education de-emphasized their role while maintaining the credibility of the organization. This "logic of confidence," as they referred to it, was present in all educational organizations to some degree and could be observed at all structural levels of the hierarchy. Since most views of organizations suggest a tight control of their technical core, or their "process," one might call into question the assertions of Meyer and Rowan. If proven accurate, however, then the credibility of the educational process as a whole comes under scrutiny.

The current study was undertaken to examine Meyer and Rowan's claims in the context of the reform movement of the 1980's. In a school district where formal efforts had been taken to control and monitor the instructional activity ongoing in its schools, an in-depth examination of the supervisory beliefs and practices of administrators was conducted.

Background

Meyer and Rowan (1978) examined the consequences concerning levels of coordination and control required when bureaucratic organizations become larger and more complex.

The logical assumption is that, as these organizations and their activities expand, higher levels of coordination and control are employed to ensure that the organizations' efficiency does not suffer (Scott, 1987).

However, Meyer and Rowan (1978) state, "There is a great deal of evidence that educational organizations (at least in the United States) lack close internal coordination, especially of the content and methods of what is presumably the main activity -- instruction" (p. 79). Instruction, in other words, is removed from the control of the administration. Glatthorn (1987) stated that it is the teacher who decides what will be taught and how it will be taught once the classroom door is closed, despite efforts at control by the administration. Goodlad (1983) reported that teachers believe that goals, topics, techniques of instruction, and activities employed are largely controlled by teachers.

While these claims fly in the face of structure and control espoused by traditional organizational theory, education in America is in a viable, even strong condition. Despite recent reform criticism, over 75 percent of the American people judged public education in their communities to be average or better (Elam & Gallup, 1989).

What emerges is a dilemma. If educational organizations do not formally control their output and if supervision of their most important technical activity (instruction) is difficult, at best, then what is the "glue"

that holds these organizations together in such a stable manner?

Theoretical Framework

An explanation for the success of educational organizations, according to Meyer and Rowan (1977; 1978), is a construct called the "logic of confidence." This concept is defined as the notion that parties bring to each other the taken-for-granted, good-faith assumption that everyone is, in fact, carrying out his or her defined activity (Meyer & Rowan, 1978). Confidence is vested in individuals in all parts of the organization without individual parties knowing what the others actually do. The public and the school board have faith, or confidence, in the superintendent, the superintendent has faith in the principal, and the principal has faith in the teachers. This is what might be termed the structural, or formal, side of the logic of confidence. Individuals at various stations in the hierarchy of the organization demonstrate evidence of confidence in those above and below them. A more personal, or informal, side of the logic of confidence emerges in the day-to-day interactions between the principal and teachers within each school (the primary concern of this study).

The "most visible aspect" of the logic of confidence within the school itself is the concept of teacher professionalism (Meyer & Rowan, 1978, p. 103). Meyer and Rowan contend professionalism exists within teaching as a "myth." Although teachers are not generally accepted as "true" professionals, they are, as noted above, granted

large amounts of autonomy and control in their work spheres. These allowances imply what one might call a "professional confidence" in teachers and the work they do. Without fully qualifying as professionals, at least from a sociological standpoint, the nature of their job demands an acknowledgment by the administration of the important professional characteristics of autonomy and control.

As a result, supervision of teachers' activities is de-emphasized and confidence is employed. The myth of professionalism emerged in educational organizations to account for the lack of monitoring of instruction (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; 1978).

In order for teacher autonomy to exist in an atmosphere where instruction is "supposedly" controlled by the administrator within the school, face-to-face interactions at times become laden with efforts to grant proper respect to appropriate parties. Administrators are expected to have enough confidence in teachers to make allowances for some abnormalities that may occur and, thus, maintain the appearance of the organization as a whole (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

In dealing with the interpersonal side of the logic of confidence, Meyer and Rowan (1977; 1978) refer to the writing of Goffman (1967) on societal interaction where he introduces the idea of "facework." Facework is the process of maintaining individuals' "face" or identity and avoiding embarrassment caused by some social error. Goffman (1967,

pp. 12-18) divides this concept into three common practices: avoidance, or refraining from making observations of individuals which may cause them embarrassment; discretion, or cautiously interacting with others to show respect and avoid offending them; and overlooking, downplaying or minimizing behavioral mistakes. Meyer and Rowan (1978) suggest that these practices exist, in some form and to some degree, in schools to enable teachers to maintain and save face, and, thus, demonstrate administrators' confidence in the abilities of teachers concerning instructional activity.

An examination of principals' reasons and their underlying beliefs was warranted to establish whether and in what form principals affirm a logic of confidence in teachers, and if there were other reasons to explain the existence of the practices that support Meyer and Rowan's (1977; 1978) contentions. Because the logic of confidence, the belief in the myth of teacher professionalism, and the practical applications of facework in the educational setting are associated with perceptions and practices in supervision of instruction (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; 1978), the investigator studied school administrators and their relationships with teachers in this context.

Through a qualitative research study, involving primarily in-depth semi-structured interviews, an analysis of administrators' supervisory beliefs and practices in public elementary schools in a suburban setting has been made. When references related to the topics of confidence, teacher autonomy, respect, and

facework were made, regardless of terminology used, the researcher used probes looking for definitions and illustrations to discern the meaning of such notions to the respondents.

Methodology

Six administrators from public schools were selected as subjects for the larger study that was conducted in the spring, 1989. Qualitative researchers characteristically deal with small sample sizes (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982; McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1980) and the researcher determined that six settings would provide variety for observation and would allow for the emergence of distinct personalities and practices.

The decision on what subjects would be used in this study involved a number of considerations. The researcher determined maximum benefits would result if the subjects were (a) the sole administrator of their school, (b) totally responsible for the supervision of instruction, (c) relatively "verbal" or expressive concerning their schools and faculties, (d) relatively open to visitors, especially one desiring to "shadow" them for the purpose of research, (e) relatively proud of their schools and confident in their situations (therefore likely to be more candid and undefensive), (f) having experience as principal of their current school, and (g) willing to participate in a study to be published in the future.

"Purposeful sampling" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) was employed to facilitate the composition of a potentially more accurate picture in the individual settings. If the characteristics mentioned above concerning administrators' openness, expressiveness, and pride in their schools and situations correlate with supervisory attitudes and behaviors, then the ability to generalize beyond these settings is limited. However, the phenomenon of the "logic of confidence" will best be manifested in informants' language and expressed attitudes, as much as it will be evidenced in behavior.

The sample was taken from schools in middle-class neighborhoods in a suburban community. The district in which these schools are situated has one of the higher mean salary scales within the state and, as a result, has the reputation of attracting some of the better and more experienced educators from not only the immediate area but around the state. In an era of "teacher shortage" the district is able to employ a corps of teachers potentially superior to that of districts with greater limitations on funds and resources. Meyer and Rowan's (1977) concept of the logic of confidence is derived from the notion of "institutionalized myths" or "ritual categories" that serve as proxies for measurable quality. These categories include whether the teachers employed in the schools hold state certificates to teach, whether they have earned degrees from accredited and reputable institutions of higher education, whether the degrees are appropriate for the subject or level

being taught, and whether or not the teachers have earned advanced degrees in their field. The researcher chose schools in a district known to have high numbers of teachers who fit the "ritual" characteristics that Meyer and Rowan (1977) highlight.

Interviews with Principals

Although a general area of concern is indicated in the open-ended interview, an attempt is made to avoid "leading" the respondent in the direction of an answer indicated within the question itself. As a result, the interviewer pursues lines of thought as they emerge rather than determining the direction of the interview beforehand.

The interview questions break down into three main categories: (a) introductory questions concerning the principals' background and general feelings on teaching and supervision; (b) relationships surrounding the supervisory process; and (c) attitudes that reflect the various elements of the logic of confidence.

The principals were encouraged to probe deeply into their feelings and experiences on the topic of how they treat teachers during supervision. This section logically led to a discussion of the various elements of the logic of confidence: professionalism and the tri-part components of facework (avoidance, discretion, and overlooking). The first step necessary was to elicit the principals' definitions and illustrations of professionalism. Once established, it would be easier later to analyze whether or

not Meyer and Rowan's (1977; 1978) "myth of professionalism" existed in these contexts.

Preliminary questions concerning the need for and importance of instructional supervision and/or monitoring addressed the principals' feelings and commitment to the types of personal programs they had described earlier. Having principals' discuss instructional "errors," the forms errors might take, and how they might deal with errors generated interview data for the eventual analysis of Goffman's (1967) three elements of facework. Interviews with the principals ranged from two to three hours in length.

Triangulation: Corroborating the Data

In an attempt to validate the statements offered by the principals, two additional data collection efforts were made. First, interviews similar in content and format to those completed with principals were conducted with two teachers in each school. Most questions in the teachers' interview solicited teachers' perceptions of the principals' attitudes and behaviors.

As a second source of corroboration for the data gathered in the principals' interviews, the researcher spent three full, non-consecutive days in each of the schools observing interactions between the principal and teachers and making notes on the nature of those interactions. The length of time each interaction took, where it took place, who initiated it, what it concerned, key quotes, and any non-verbal cues observed were hand recorded for later

analysis and comparison to other data. Most of these interactions took place in the principals' offices, but others occurred in the hallway, on the playground, in the outer office, in the teachers' lounge, and in teachers' classrooms.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data involved a re-examination of the purposes of the study. The umbrella under which all research was conducted was Meyer and Rowan's (1977; 1978) construct called the logic of confidence, incorporating the personal interactions of facework as described by Goffman (1967). An interest as to how the logic of confidence is evidenced in schools during the process of instructional supervision (if it is at all) provided the basis for the design in the study. Six research questions were developed to guide the study and provided a framework for a more detailed interview questionnaire to be used during data collection. The research questions are reviewed below.

QUESTION #1 - How do administrators describe and explain their supervisory attitudes and practices?

QUESTION #2 - How do administrators describe the face-to-face interactions that occur between them and their teachers on instructional matters?

QUESTION #3 - Does the logic of confidence play a part in how administrators view and carry out their instructional supervision?

QUESTION #4 - Does the behavior of administrators corroborate administrators' statements of their supervisory beliefs?

QUESTION #5 - How do teachers describe and explain their administrators' supervisory beliefs and practices?

QUESTION #6 - Does the logic of confidence play a part in how the teachers perceive their administrators' instructional supervision?

The eighteen interviews with principals and teachers, combined with the field notes gathered during the observations, provided the researcher with an abundance of data. The reduction of those data into a form profitable for analysis involved a complex operation which included four procedures.

Analytical Categories

Patton (1980) proposes that the processing of qualitative data should involve two major processes. He calls them "analysis" and "interpretation." Analysis involves the process of bringing order to the data -- organizing them into categories and basic descriptive units. This will allow for sorting and determining how the data will be presented when the time comes. During examination of the transcripts (which were verbatim and included the interview protocol among the data) the researcher marked data segments (phrases, sentences, or combination of both) which connoted topics of discussion specifically related to supervision of instruction and the logic of confidence. Data segments were then labeled or coded according to the

conceptual categories associated with supervision of instruction and the logic of confidence. Upon further examination, some overly discrete codes were combined into composite categories.

The condensing of these preliminary groupings yielded nine distinct analytical categories. These nine categories include (a) the priority of supervision among the principal's most important jobs, (b) the purposes of supervision, (c) formal evaluation and informal monitoring, (d) differentiation of supervision among teachers, (e) instructional problems, (f) interpersonal relations, (g) confidence, (h) control and teacher autonomy, and (i) teacher professionalism.

Patton (1980) offered a second step in qualitative research following analysis. This step -- the reason for the research in the first place -- is interpretation. Interpretation gives meaning and significance to the analysis of data already conducted. Descriptive patterns are explained and relationships and linkages are established among the descriptive elements (Patton, 1980). Using the nine analytical categories that resulted from the first step analyses, a matrix was formed, arranging categories by principals. The nine analytical categories were placed down the left side of a large sheet of paper as labels for the rows. The six principals were placed across the top of the sheet as headings for the various columns. In the cells that were formed (e.g., priority of supervision and the

first principal) were placed abbreviated quotes and observation notes pertinent to the two elements composing the cell. (These condensed data units were coded for source - "P" for principal, "T" for teacher, and "R" for researcher.) The abbreviated quotes were extracted to be representative of data segments that were pre-coded for analysis in the first step when the nine analytical categories were created.

The matrix served two purposes. First, it allowed the researcher to condense the information gathered through the interviews and observations for easier handling. Second, it offered a graphic display from which patterns across cases could emerge that would make interpretative analysis possible. Interpretation for this study entailed the drawing of conclusions about relationships between instructional supervision -- as described and practiced by the six principals -- and Meyer and Rowan's (1977; 1978) assertions about the logic of confidence.

Results

A first concern is whether or not instructional supervision is, in fact de-emphasized. It is necessary to look at what might be considered standard practice in this area. What is a lot of supervision? What is lax supervision? Without reliable quantitative data on the effects of supervision, the present study offers only an impressionistic view of this issue.

All six of the principals in the study expressed regrets that limited time and resources prevented their

supervising more diligently than they did. However, none of them downplayed the importance of supervision of instruction in their job. Four of the six indicated it was their most important function as principals.

What emerged from the data was the idea that some form of contact with the teachers and their instruction was important to the principals. The principals stated that they "knew" their teachers and "were aware" of the quality of instruction taking place. Only one principal hinted at a more distant relationship due to the abundance of duties she had assumed as a result of losing an administrative assistant.

Likewise, teachers in every school claimed their principal was "on top of things" and "had a finger on the pulse" of the instruction of teachers. Not one of the twelve teachers expressed the slightest doubt about his or her principal's familiarity with instructional practice. In no way, therefore, does the teachers' commentary imply that supervision among these six principals was disregarded or de-emphasized.

The more frequent contact administrators have with their teachers, the greater the awareness of the instruction taking place is going to be. In contrast, however, the principals complained about needing and wanting more time to spend in the classrooms. The resulting impression was that these principals were not common fixtures in the classrooms; nevertheless, neither were they strangers.

The district providing the setting for the research had established strict curriculum guidelines for the teachers to follow and the principal to monitor. Although they didn't originate from the principals themselves, the guidelines clearly exercise control over the content of the curriculum. Pacing charts are used by the principals to ensure that teachers are where they are supposed to be and are teaching what has been prescribed for them.

This research concludes that the six principals in this study may have more supervising contact with teachers than is envisioned in the Meyer and Rowan impression of standard practice. Similarly, while Meyer and Rowan expect teachers to operate with large degrees of autonomy, the results of this study suggest that the status of principal control versus teacher autonomy is somewhat mixed, although it leans toward a view of principals as more interested in control than Meyer and Rowan might expect.

Additionally, the data imply that these principals are probably doing more monitoring of instruction than Meyer and Rowan suggest. The principals in the study not only conducted the district's formal evaluation program with relative fidelity but also initiated multiple contacts with the teachers and the classrooms in order to "know" what was going on outside the office.

Myth of Professionalism

Meyer and Rowan suggest that institutional administrators (and the general public) accept teachers as "professionals." Teachers "earn" the epithet not because of

the standard sociological attributes ascribed to doctors, lawyers, and engineers, but because their licensing and academic credentials are assumed to warrant a degree of autonomy and independence of activity in their work. Meyer and Rowan assert the institutionalization of this set of warrants has legitimated teachers as professionals. The data suggest that the principals in the study have a much broader interpretation of the concept of professionalism.

Except when discussing competence, little of Meyer and Rowan's perceptions are recognizable. One principal noted that a professional brings to the job his or her "knowledge," "certification," and "degree." Another alluded to the importance of "training." Again, the data only marginally give credence to the foundation on which Meyer and Rowan's logic of confidence lies.

Professionals, in the eyes of the six principals in the study, are people who assume responsibilities (are generally responsible, are leaders and decision-makers serving on committees or running faculty meetings); are competent (possess a knowledge of their craft through training, certification, or degrees, keep abreast of current research and trends, seek to improve themselves); comport themselves appropriately (behave in a model or emulatable manner, portray a positive image through dress, decorum, and demeanor); express appropriate attitudes of dedication and respect (demonstrate respect for the student and the profession, are flexible concerning working hours, possess a

sense of pride, are dedicated giving a complete effort at all times, go the "extra mile," are always seeking a fresh, new approach, are open to suggestions); and participate in the profession (attending district workshops, serving district committees, attending local, regional, and national conventions).

Facework

Goffman's (1967) notions of facework, as manifested in society at large, are incorporated within Meyer and Rowan's concept of logic of confidence concept. Where professionalism (or "myth" of professionalism) concerns the more formal organizational aspects of the logic of confidence, facework brings the interpersonal side of Meyer and Rowan's suggestions into play. Using Goffman's designations, Meyer and Rowan allege that during supervisory activity administrators employ the practices of avoidance and overlooking in order not to have to confront problems that arise, and they use discretion when talking to people caught in embarrassing situations. The three notions can be translated as avoidance ("I make sure that I don't see"), overlooking ("I see but I pretend I don't see"), and discretion ("I see and react with caution"). All three kinds of reactions help teachers "save face" (Goffman, 1967).

Avoidance

There are a variety of reasons why an administrator might choose to de-emphasize supervisory contact with teachers but Goffman's (1967) notion of avoidance is not

supported by the data collected in this study. To the contrary, the interview data suggested two overriding reasons why these principals felt they could not avoid a problem with instruction that a teacher might have, and teachers' commentary corroborate the principals' positions.

The first reason was made evident when the principals discussed their most important job in their schools. Most of the principals (supported by most of the teachers and the observation data) asserted that their most important job in their schools was to see that the students received proper instruction. While it is true that time spent on this responsibility was often dominated by other duties, the principals still named it most important. With this announcement made, to suggest that they might avoid instructional situations that were potentially problematic would constitute a contradiction. The principals indicated that these problems could not be avoided, but that they would act on them immediately or later, depending on the severity of the problem. Quite the opposite of avoidance, regular monitoring of instruction would bring problems to light.

Another reason offered is related to the remediation process. Each of the principals told of a situation where they had to "go the route" with a teacher who was unacceptable to them. The principals did not avoid the teacher, although two of them either were apprehensive before an observation or "dreaded" going in to see the

person teach. On the contrary, the principals complained of "due process" delays when dealing with ineffective teachers. Their statements concerning terminating ineffective teachers imply a resolve to "take care of business," not avoid contact with the teacher as Meyer and Rowan suggest they might.

The second reason offered in support of these principals' willingness to confront problems with teachers' instruction is closely tied to the remediation practices just discussed. The principals unanimously agreed that when they observe potential problems in the classroom, whether in ability to handle students, information, or even inconsistencies in lesson plans, they feel an undeniable compulsion to correct them: "If I see something wrong, I speak to that person. . ." -- "If I see a problem on a lesson plan, I check it out." -- "First I feel anger, then embarrassment, then an urgency to correct the problem. . . " -- "I want to get up and correct it. . ." -- "Quality control is my job." Meyer and Rowan suggest that future contact with these teachers might be avoided.

Both avoidance and overlooking involve "looking the other way" when problems are apparent, but avoidance permits the administrator to pretend the situation doesn't exist. The principals in the study disconfirm the Goffman notion of avoidance.

Overlooking

The second dimension of facework is overlooking, the most glaring of the three dimensions. The term "glaring"

implies that the principals now become "partners" in the mistake, having seen or been informed of the problem. The assumption is that their obligations as principals demand their attention in resolving the situation. Overlooking admits that a mistake has been made and observed, but, to preserve the teacher's face, an attempt is made to de-emphasize the error by assuming or pretending that the behavior is abnormal or atypical.

Consistent with previous quantitative research results and notions concerning avoidance (Okeafor, 1983; Okeafor, Licata, & Ecker, 1987; Okeafor & Teddlie, 1987), the six principals in this study were not willing to concede that they practiced overlooking. Statements by the principals indicated their feelings on overlooking errors.

> [Overlooking] tells teachers it's okay to make mistakes. . . . It could [adversely] affect the morale of others.
>
> If it is gross negligent instructional errors, I think you have to do something right away. You can't waste a lot of time because students are being hurt.
>
> I would think you would try to correct any error. You have to correct it. You can't let it go by. . . . The error has to be taken care of.
>
> I think [overlooking errors] would be awful. . . . I think that it is a very grave mistake.

In most cases the teachers supported the statements offered by the principals. They also said the principals would not overlook teachers' errors, for doing so would be neglecting their formal responsibilities -- "It's [correcting teachers mistakes] their job."

What was apparent from the data was that these principals were not inclined automatically to give teachers the benefit of the doubt in such cases. Meyer and Rowan's use of Goffman's definition for overlooking implies an attitude of "automatically forgiving" on the part of the principals. To categorize the teacher's behavior as being atypical, abnormal, or aberrant (especially where Meyer and Rowan claim that supervisory contact with teachers is minimal, suggesting a degree of unfamiliarity with teachers) is to suggest that teachers deserve the benefit of the doubt.

On the contrary, even though the principals in this study defended the teachers in front of students and parents, the "correction" of the problem still took place, although usually in private. In addition, the principals felt no professional obligation, even publicly, to protect a teacher who had knowingly broken school board policies or mishandled students and parents. "You can't always support the teacher," said one, and "If the teacher has done something definitely wrong, I don't think that the principal should go about protecting them," said another. Principals denied an "automatic" inclination toward overlooking.

In order to be able to interpret whether or not overlooking existed in these six principals' attitudes and practices, one must understand the subtlety of the notion. Overlooking is not "doing" something, which in most cases is observable, but it is "not doing" something -- a considerably less obvious behavior. Since avoidance (to a lesser degree) might also be characterized in this way, it could be said that these two dimensions are conveyed by the absence of overt behavior and, for that reason, are much more subtle than the third dimension of facework called "discretion."

Discretion

Discretion concerns interactions with individuals that are cautiously undertaken to show respect or politeness even when the individuals are thought to have behaved unacceptably or inappropriately on the job. Statements concerning the person's work or position are carefully worded to avoid contradicting or embarrassing them.

A major issue in the discussion of discretion is the notion of respect. It was discovered that the principal talked of respect for teachers in two ways or on two distinct levels. The first level concerns the more basic demonstrations of fairness, equity, consideration, and the use of manners when interacting with others. The second level, a deeper interpretation concerning people's emotional needs, involved being sensitive to individuals' sense of personal worth and importance.

Five of the six administrators alluded to or quoted verbatim the maxim, "Praise in public; chastise in private." This credo, adopted by the principals, emphasizes the teachers' need to feel competent in their work and to receive acknowledgment of some sort. Yet, more importantly (especially where the notion of discretion is a concern), teachers deserve to be corrected in private where embarrassment can be kept to minimum and face can be protected. This indicated that these principals, for whatever reason, do not like to put teachers "on the spot." Criticisms, when necessary, are offered in private allowing the teacher to avoid embarrassment in front of others. The principals go a step further in this respect and even "choose their words," employing tact and diplomacy, to allow the teacher to accept the criticism more "comfortably."

One principal observed that during evaluation conferences, she made a practice of mentioning two good things she saw to one point of criticism. Another, who witnessed a mistake in the instruction, prefaced her correction with, "I know you didn't mean to, but -- ", granting that teacher an easy way out by implying that the teacher really knew better. Upon hearing negative things from various sources concerning a teacher, one principal claimed to say, "I don't think you did, but there are some people saying -- ." A fourth principal stated that it was important to know your people, to know "how" to approach them during these times, indicating a generally accepted practice of employing discretion. Even the one principal

who appeared to have less concern than the others for the feelings of her teachers still acknowledged the importance of respect and, in her view, attempted to communicate it to her teachers.

There were numerous other demonstrations of discretion with some assertions almost "taken off the pages" of Meyer and Rowan. The first principal interviewed stated, "I feel an obligation not to embarrass the teacher, I really do. I think their feelings do have to be protected here," and is typical.

The principals talked of their "casual" approach to correcting problems, allowing time to pass between the teachers' committing of the error in the classroom and the principals' confrontation of the problem "off to the side," regardless of the principals' personal sense of anger or urgency.

One principal concluded her thoughts on this point by saying, "That's my whole philosophy in life that you are talking about right now. That is the way I deal with all people, at least try to."

There might be at least two possible reasons that came from the data as to why these principals would have these feelings. First, all had been teachers before becoming principals, one mentioning, "We all came from the same place." This common origin could possibly have produced in the principals a "natural empathy" sympathetic to the plight of the teacher. One principal noted, "Teachers need to know

someone is in their corner." Secondly, two of the principals were mentioned by their teachers as being "sensitive to criticism" themselves, thus possibly producing or intensifying their sympathetic orientation toward others.

Teachers' comments are especially important in the consideration of discretion and the outward show of respect. Anyone can claim to have and display respect for others, but unless those on the receiving end feel, or least recognize, the efforts, the effort is wasted.

Four of the principals received confirming statements from teachers concerning their principals' exhibition of respect and discretion. These teachers cited the principals' "casual way" of dealing with problems; their non-intimidating (and "laid back") approach to evaluation procedures and suggestions for improvement; their manner of speech and tone of voice typified by the "air" of "dignity, politeness," and "respect"; their defense of teachers in front of parents and students and their corrections conducted "on the side," "private and confidential"; their attitudes as being "optimistic," "pleasant," "caring," and "concerned"; and their ability to make teachers "have good feelings" and "feel good" about themselves.

The other two principals received mixed assessments of their tendencies concerning discretion. In one case both teachers felt the principal exhibited respect and confidence in her faculty, but one of them went on to note that some of the teachers (especially those who had been several years at this school) felt that the principal's words of

encouragement and compliments were "not sincere." The second principal, who was generally liked by the teachers interviewed was apparently guilty of making some of the other teachers feel she had no respect for them. The teachers interviewed cited statements threatening some of the other teachers with being "written up," and quoted the principal as saying, "It's not my job to make you happy. . . ."

All of the teachers confirmed the fact that the principals kept their dealings with teachers private and confidential. After establishing that she had known the principal for a number of years and had been with her in a variety of contexts, one teacher said that she had never heard the principal say anything bad about another teacher and had never discussed other teachers' problems with her. In a different school, another teacher said, "We don't know who [the principal] does or doesn't have confidence in. She is very professional with that."

In sum, the data support the conclusion that these principals, individually and as a group, demonstrated to their teachers that they were caring individuals and sensitive to the fair and courteous treatment that they apparently felt the teachers deserved. Their practice of praising in public and chastising in private codified their commitment to treat their teachers with respect and shows a strong evidence of the role of discretion in principals' supervisory behavior. Meyer and Rowan (1977) refer to this activity as "making things work out backstage" (p. 358).

Conclusions

Meyer and Rowan (1977; 1978) contend that their notions concerning the logic of confidence are present and accounted for in educational organizations. Their theory is offered as an explanation for the de-emphasis on the supervision of instruction in schools. The principals and teachers in this study appear to indicate, in some ways and to a degree, that these authors are correct. As one principal stated,

> Trust -- I trust them (teachers). I guess I feel that they are doing right and so, therefore, I don't view my role as a police role or even as a role to make sure that they are doing right. They know that I expect them to teach well and get good results.
>
> I feel an obligation not to embarrass the teacher, I really do. I think their feelings do have to be protected here.

It is the researcher's opinion that the data related to "myth of professionalism" as proposed by Meyer and Rowan (1977; 1978) bear a relationship to their categories of analysis. A sense of teacher professionalism exists among the principals, but it may be founded on teacher-principal relations more than "ritual categories" (the credentials, certifications, and degrees) proffered by Meyer and Rowan.

"Avoidance" and "overlooking" are almost non-existent in the principals' descriptions of their beliefs and practices. Only in one or two cases do the teachers take exception to the principals' interpretation.

Finally, "discretion" was found to exist, yet not for the reasons Meyer and Rowan suggest. The principals and teachers tell of elaborate efforts at showing the teachers respect and displaying confidence in their abilities. However, the principals in no way indicate that their actions are related to the grander notions of Meyer and Rowan's concepts. An explanation as easily accepted might be that the principals are "just nice people," or that they treat their teachers this way because "they have to live with the teachers" and to do otherwise would cause interpersonal relationships to suffer.

One overriding reason is suggested as to why Meyer and Rowan's concepts apparently do not exist in these schools. The absence of the logic of confidence in the schools examined can be attributed to the reality that Meyer and Rowan's theories are more than a decade old. They published the works concerning these issues just prior to, or at least in the early stages of, educational reform and movements toward organizational accountability. The myth of professionalism was "exploded" by constant media references to incompetence and insufficient standards for credentials.

As a result, central administrations were "under the gun" to talk about and do more in the way of supervising the instruction taking place in the nation's schools. (The strict curriculum guidelines imposed on the schools in the current study might be an outgrowth of this movement. The district incorporating these schools has made accountability a priority.) Consequently, in the context of the state of

educational reform, the logic of confidence might simply be outdated.

A second conclusion, not related to the logic of confidence, also emerged through the data and the literature review. Alternatives (to the logic of confidence) for the explanation of relaxed supervisory practices were analyzed in the light of the data. Two components of larger categories received strong support as being reasons why administrators might not supervise closely. Confidence in the competence of the principals' teachers was supported in that all felt they "knew" their faculty for various reasons. As a result, the temptation to de-emphasize contact and the practice of relaxing supervision with some individuals was in evidence.

The second proposal, and the one to receive the strongest support from the data involved the wide span of control of the principals and the lack of resources to manage all parts effectively. The principals' emphasis on "time" as the primary reason for their "unsatisfactory" (their personal feelings) supervisory procedures cannot be missed. Their complaints concerning the loss of administrative assistants and the "overload" of jobs placed upon them stress the strength of this notion concerning their supervision of instruction.

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